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DISCOURSE

PREACHED AT

BERKLEY CHAPEL,

On the DAY of the

GENERAL FAST,

1761.  
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BY JOHN KIDGELL, A. M.

Preacher of BERKLEY Chapel, Rector of WOLVERSTON  
in SUFFOLK, and Chaplain to the Right Hon.  
the Earl of MARCH.

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L O N D O N :

Printed by W. STRAHAN. MDCCLXI.

DISCOURSE

PREACHED AT

BARNLEY CHAPEL

ON THE DAY OF THE

GENERAL FAST

1801

BY JOHN WILKINSON, A.M.



LONDON

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TO THE  
ACCEPTANCE and PATRONAGE

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE,

W I L L I A M,

Earl of MARCH and RUGLEN,

One of the

Lords of the Bedchamber to his Majesty,

This DISCOURSE is,

With the utmost Respect and Acknowledgment,

DEDICATED,

By his Lordship's

Obliged Chaplain,

And most obedient

Humble Servant,

Johnstreet Westm.  
Febr. 13.

JOHN KIDGELL.

TO THE  
ACCEPTANCE and PATRONAGE

OF THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM  
MARCHEM RUGLEN

One of the

lords of the Bedchamber to his Majesty

THIS DISCOURSE

With the usual History and Acknowledgments

AND A LETTER

By the Author's

Official Chaplain

And most obedient

His Grace's

JOHN KIDGELL

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PSALM xx. at the 9th Verse.

SAVE, LORD, AND HEAR US, O KING OF  
HEAVEN, WHEN WE CALL UPON THEE.

**T**HAT a Being of infinite Perfection hath existed from Eternity, by whom all Worlds were made, is an interesting and awful Truth, which Mankind in general do acknowledge, and it is presumed, believe. The Heavens, which so evidently *declare the Glory of God*, are beyond Controversy a Demonstration of his *Power*. Nor is the Fabric of this inferior World too weak a Proof of the same great God Almighty, either to excite our Wonder, or command our Veneration.

But when with the created Heavens and the Earth are considered the whole *animal Species*, and above all, the *Human*: That to Matter is communicated Motion, and Life, and Thought, and Memory, and Reflection, and the Hope of a blessed Immortality, how are we animated to believe with all the Heart, and with all the Soul, and from  
the

the Cradle to the Grave, to REMEMBER OUR  
CREATOR !

But it is for Men of little Faith to acknowledge only a *creating God*. A slender and insufficient Return indeed to the Mercies which we experience. For is this all the Glory which we can ascribe to the Inhabiter of Eternity? Could he, who *in his own Image* made Mankind, forget the Life he gave? Left he first the created Pair, in Labor and Sorrow, to sustain a weak and miserable Posterity, exposed in a defenceless Infancy to innumerable Accidents fatal to their Security, Ease, and Comfort? He, under whose merciful Protection *the Sparrow hath found her an House, and the Swallow a Nest where she may lay her Young*? It is impossible.

That the supreme God should in his infinite Mercy *support* whom he had created, is by no means too distant from Reason to be admitted. That to him the helpless *Infant* owes its Safety; to him the tender State of *Childhood* its Protection; to him the *advanced in Wisdom and in Stature* Advantages peculiar to their Maturity; and that in proportion as the Families of Mankind increased, and Society became requisite for their common Aid, and Utility, and Protection, the Blessing of the same

Heavenly

Heavenly Interposer hath descended upon human Labors, as a Testimony of his Goodness, his Mercy, and his paternal Care, from the Foundation of the World.

But as these, the rational Evidences of Divine Providence, obtained no favorable Reception in the Hearts of the Wicked, and the Unbelieving, a more perfect *Revelation of the Being and Attributes of God* was wonderfully communicated to Mankind, assisting them in the comfortable Discovery of Truth, the Belief of which, (notwithstanding an infinite Diversity of human Opposition) no Distance of Time, no Vicissitude of Fortune, no Change of Government, no not even the Idolatries of the heathen World could exterminate.

The History of the Kings of *Israel* and of *Judah*, mean and contemptible as it hath been represented, and with much familiar Censure and Remark from the *Seat of the Scornful*, is yet a noble and authentic Extract of the Annals of the antient World, recording memorable Atchievements of successful Armies, which no Nation under Heaven might disdain to look on with equal Praise and Wonder. That it has not more generally that Effect, is lamentable. The



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cool Acceptance that it meets with, (nay, actually the slender Credit) is astonishing.

But what are human Prejudices, but a Demonstration of our Wretchedness, and our Frailty, our small Extent of Thought, and incompetency of Judgment? The Truth of God is undeniable. Believe it, or believe it not, it is the Truth of God. Divest it of all Advantages, it will convince. If DAVID be esteemed partial as a *Prophet*, consider him in the Character of a *Soldier*. — See him renowned in Battle, yet clothed with Humility: “ I will not trust in my Bow, it is not my Sword that shall help me; ” in the Pride and Joy of Conquest, ascribing unto God the Glory, “ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the Praise.” In all the Difficulties and Dangers which are inseparable from a Time of War, imploring, and teaching to implore, the Divine assistance; *some put their Trust in Chariots, and some in Horses, but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.* SAVE, LORD, AND HEAR US, O KING OF HEAVEN, WHEN WE CALL UPON THEE.

As this World is circumstanced, *Nation will rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom,* and the *Sword of War* is found as requisite to preserve the Connections, and Order,

der of Society, as the *Sword of Justice*. Surely it is to all the PRINCES in the World an infinitely interesting Concern, that God himself assisteth them, in the Preservation of the Peace and Liberties of *their People*, and that if Justice be their Aim, Heaven will be their Protection. Let us consider on this our DAY OF HUMILIATION, the Reasonableness of a suitable Dependence on this glorious Interposition of a merciful Creator, “and vindicate the Ways of God to Man.”

When the proud King of *Assyria* had insulted the weaker Hosts of *Israel*, did *Hezekiah* make that Pious Prayer unheard? “*Lord, bow down thine Ear, and hear, open Lord, thine Eyes and see\* ! bear the Words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to reproach the LIVING GOD.*”

That astonishing Slaughter of the *Assyrian* army, which, in consequence of this good King's Supplication, was foretold by the Prophet *Isaiab*, was, beyond all possibility of human Expectation accomplished, in their very Camp, and their Blaspheming King himself destroyed, amidst the Multitude of his Hosts.

\* 2 Kings xix. 16.



The *Race* is not always to the *Swift*, or the *Battle* to the *Strong*.

When the religious King of *Judah* went up with wicked *Ahab* to *Ramoth Gilead*, who guided the fatal Shaft in that adventuring Hand, which smote the *disguised King of Israel between the Joints of the Harness* \*. Who? Why it was that great *God of Armies*, that unseen Disposer of Events, who had already sent his disregarded *Prophet*, to cry aloud, to spare not, to lift up his Voice like a *Trumpet*, to foretell that wretched King's Destruction.

But let me not multiply Instances from the holy Scriptures, for *one* from that authentic Volume, is to a Christian Audience, as a *Thousand*. Demand of the Experience of later Ages, appeal to Examples which we have heard, and known, not such only as *our Fathers have told us*, but which we have lived fortunately to see. Remember the Blessings, and the Successes, and those favourable Circumstances, of even a Time of War, which are at this Hour the more familiar Objects of our Thanksgiving, and our Praise, and disdain not to turn unto the Lord, with weeping, and with fasting, and with mourn-

\* 2 Ch on. xviii. ver. 33.



ing, for the Preservation of such a Community as this.

Admit that we discern not with our *corporal Senses* the interposing Hand of God, concerned evidently in our Defence, yet to our *intellectual Sight*, that wondrous Guidance of the Supreme is confessedly distinguishable, and the *invisible Things of God* are as absolutely acknowledged in our *Hearts*, as if we saw them with our *Eyes*.

That *wise Disputers of the World*, either from their Perversity, their Wickedness, or their Ignorance, are not more generally prevailed upon to acknowledge the Divine Providence, cannot possibly be admitted as an Argument that no such Providence doth exist. A Forgetfulness of Benefits and Favours is no Degree of Proof that they *never* were conferred, in the Opinion of any Man living, *but the Ungrateful*.

But what saith our Heavenly Instructor in Righteousness for our Aid in this interesting Enquiry? *Consider the Lillies of the Field*. Observe attentively the gradual Advances of so minute a Vegetable. Can the most curious Eye discern any Part of the Progression of this *sweet Ornament of the Valley*? And yet that it doth arrive regularly, and without Ex-

ception of one in many thousand Instances to the Maturity of its Perfection, its Fragrance, and its Beauty, is undeniable.

So, in the Progress of Causes infinite in their Variety, the Interposition of God's Providence is, in the moral Government of the World, as to its *Manner of acting* invisible, but exceedingly evident in its *Effects*. The Generality of Mankind ( God be praised, ) is satisfied of the consummate Equity of this Assertion. Both *high and low* conspire in that Simplicity, that Candor, that Acquiescence, and finally, in that *common Sense*, which lead to the profound Acknowledgement of so comfortable a Truth. It is for Men only of bright Parts, and an aspiring Genius, great in Nature, and improved by Education, to dispute it. Who *not having Faith* themselves, scarcely can induce that others should aspire to so divine a Virtue: *Wise in their own Sight as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*. The sole efficient Causes of all the Good which they receive, and all the Comforts which they enjoy.

And is there (can we be persuaded to believe?) that transcendent Excellence in human Nature which can supply the Absence of the Deity? In whom is an infallible Understanding? And Counsel which may be

be depended on in all Emergencies? And Strength which cannot fear Resistance? And a consummate Knowledge of Futurity? Where these are manifest, there is the Governor of the World. It is in him only to whom these Attributes can be ascribed, to be *the Preserver of Men*. He, whose Power is *Omnipotence*, whose Wisdom is *Omniscience*, whose Goodness is *Holiness*, whose Greatness is *Immensify*, and whose Age *Eternity*.

*But God is too great to behold the Things which are in Heaven and in Earth.*—Then would he not have been too great to have created those Things? We are in no Degree accessory to our own Existence. *For his Pleasure we are, and were created*: And upon a Supposition that there is no *Providence Divine* from whom we may reasonably hope for Aid, in all the Difficulties which are inseparable from this inconstant World, we are, of all the Creatures upon Earth, the most sincerely to be compassionated; the *Fowls of the Air*, and the *Beasts of the Field*, are a Species of Beings far happier than the *Human*: They, sustained by the bounteous Productions of Nature, and blessed with constant Plenty, and Ease, and regular Habits, without the Knowledge of Excess, or even the Desire of it, whilst inseparable from the Sons of Men, is Anxiety, and Care, and  
unjust



unjust Censure, and continual Vicissitude, and the Loss of all we love, and Sickness, and Pain, and *severe* Death; — *Variety of Misfortune!*

But Opinion rejoiceth in Speculation, and Liberty of Thought admits of no Confinement. “ It is *not a manifest Unbelief in Providence*, (you will say) *but a kind of Diffidence, which I cannot overcome.*” But why not overcome the *Diffidence*? Is there no Aid from Heaven possible? *Lord I believe, help thou my Unbelief!* I have a little Faith, O God, assist me to increase it!

“ *But I see good Men frequently in Circumstances of extreme Distress, and am amazed, (if there be an interposing Providence) that they are not more universally the Care of such a just and merciful God.*”

Are you sure that you see *good Men* so circumstanced? You believe doubtless that you do, but who knoweth the Secrets of the Heart? And how perpetually we are deceived by ten thousand Appearances of *Goodness*? It is probable that what even the best of us suffer, is not the one half of what we may *deserve* to suffer. But have Patience to wait the Issue of heavenly Dispensations. If they really are *good Men*, they will revere their  
God,



God, even in their Adversity, whether it be in saying with the distressed *Eli\**, *it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; or with patient *Job* in uncorrupt Integrity †, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord*; or with one still more severely destitute of every worldly Comfort ‡, *not my Will, O God, but thine be done*.

But should you still be tempted by the unequal Portion and Allotment of this World's Good, to look upon the great *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, as inattentive to the Care, and the Protection and the Reward of *virtuous* Individuals, consider for one Moment the general Consequences of moral Good and Evil. *That* from every the minutest Degree of a virtuous and reputable Deportment, there is seen absolutely to result some apparent Emolument to Mankind. *That* the Industrious and the Frugal, are usually crowned with Plenty; the Temperate and the Abstemious with Health; the Prudent and the Circumspect with Safety; and above all, with that Composure, that Serenity, that Peace of Mind, and Ease of Conscience, which *is not to be purchased with Money, that Favour with God*

\* Sam. iii. 18.    † Job i. 24.    ‡ Luke xxii. 41.

and

*and Man*, which is inseparable from the Upright and the Sincere.

Then, call to your Remembrance those innumerable Evils, which attend on human Vices. Reflect seriously and deliberately, and with Attention. Set before your Eyes a *covetous Man*, or a revengeful, or a Man given to Excess, loose in Morals, and destitute of Conscience; think of all his Intervals of Inquietude and Disappointment, and secret Misgivings of Heart; of Health impaired, and Reputation lost; of the little Esteem which he possesses, and the less which he deserves, and I am persuaded that there is no Affluence of Circumstances upon Earth, which can make such a Man the Object of your Envy, even though it were an extreme Difficulty to obtain your daily Bread.

Oppose every *Vice* to every *Virtue* under Heaven. Compare criminal Voluptuousness with Pleasures temperate and inoffensive; the angry, the unforgiving, and the discontented, with the easy, the benevolent, and the humane: Single from all Orders and all Degrees of men; the wise in their Deportment, and the studious in their Calling; and if they have not infinitely a fairer Prospect of Credit and Comfort, and every possible Degree of Success, than the Slothful, and the Wasteful,  
and

and the averse to Discipline,—there is no Dependence on Experience.

Nay, let the PLEASURES of the World advance exquisite in their Variety, and fair as they are to look on. Dispose them to the best Advantage. Set them together in Array. Confront them with Abstinence and Moderation, and domestic Oeconomy, and the Fruits of Discretion and Retirement. Even they themselves will confess, (and a Thousand distressed Families will bear witness to the Deposition) that they (envied as they are) are *lighter upon the Balance than Vanity itself*. A SNARE to the unacquainted with the World, to the Experienced, an *Incumbrance*.

The invariable Tendency which there is in every Departure from Goodness to make Mankind unhappy, is a rational and convincing Argument of an universal Providence, consulting the general Good of all the Families of the Earth, in their respective Degrees of *Subordination*. For a perfect *Equality* among Men would destroy human Society.

Surely there is not to the Soul so comfortable a Subject of Meditation as that of the infinite Goodness of God interested in our Preservation, and every Moment of our Lives intent upon that gracious and merciful Design.



sign. If there be not that one Creature living, too inconsiderable to have attracted the Attention of its Divine Creator, how much more shall the *human* Species be animated to rejoice in the constant and benign Protection of an Almighty and most merciful Father!

*What Man is there among you of whom if his Son should ask Bread, would he give him a Stone?* is a severe but just Reproach of our Forgetfulness of him our heavenly Father, who cannot but have Compassion on our Infirmities: Whose Property it is always to have Mercy; *to give to those that ask*, those who implore the Blessings of his Providence with undissembled Piety, and consider his Honour and Glory as the grand Object of their Ambition.

But is the Goodness of our heavenly Preserver the less, in Fact, conspicuous, because the Vitious do not see it, or the Prejudiced acknowledge it not? If the Pride and Vanities of the World have turned aside our Hearts from God, shall it therefore be affirmed that there is *no* God? Are the Degrees of Light and Shade imperceptible to the Eye, because a *blind* Man has lost the Power of discerning them?

*The Lord is King, be the People never so impatient;*



*patient; he sitteth between the Cherubims, be the Earth never so unquiet.*

Does the favourite Child perceive with what an exquisite Sense of Feeling the tender Hearts of Parents are distressed for its Security? They, by almost every Thought and Word, and Action of their Lives, consult its constant Interest; think of it in its Absence every Moment with Anxiety, esteem no Pains too great, no Labour too incessant for its Preservation, its Success, and its Improvement; whilst the little idle Object of all their Sollicitude and Love, and Hopes, and Fears, never once, no not once, remembers the dearest Friends he has.

And do we, the Children of *our Father which is in Heaven*, (increased as we are in Stature, Years, and Wisdom,) do we more regularly, or more attentively, look up to the Author of innumerable Benefits? Are our wandering Thoughts reclaimed calmly to aspire to *Habitations of Holiness, and of Glory*? Do we daily and hourly, nay, do we *at all* consider, in our more serious and abstracted Moments, by our Meditations, or at our Prayers, those unspeakable Blessings which result from the Divine Protection?

Wonderful is God's interposing Power,  
C 2 but

but by no Means too difficult to be supposed. It is astonishing, but it is not incredible.

In Confidence of the Truth of this venerable and sacred Doctrine, the Wisdom of the Legislature hath proclaimed a *Fast*, and called a *solemn Assembly*. This Day of public Humiliation is consecrated to implore Relief from Heaven in the present national Emergencies. And if, *when two or three are gathered together*, there is Mercy with God to hear the secret Prayer, is it believed, or even suspected, from any reasonable Grounds of Conjecture, that the united Voices of an Assembled People can lament their Sins in vain?

Abundantly do we (even in this *Time of Trouble*) enjoy Advantages, which Nations, greater and mightier than we, are miserably sensible of the Want of. It is not only our *memorable* Success in War, but the Circumstances of our Situation that is the just Object of our Acknowledgment. Our common Sentiments of Humanity will enable us to recollect with Pity the Distresses of those unhappy People, whose Kingdoms are the Seat of War; lamenting the Ruin of their Commerce, and the Scarcity of their Provisions, whilst Fear inexpressible is on every Side, for every dear, and precious, and intimate Connection

nection in Nature; whilst *Thousands* fall before them, and *ten Thousand* at their right Hand, and every Condition in Life is reduced to suffer an universal Calamity, which spareth neither Age, nor Sex, an Avenger of Wrath, without Respect of Persons, *from him that sitteth on a Throne of Glory, unto him that is humbled in Earth and Ashes.*

How shall we congratulate the *Victorious*, great in the Art of War, and prosperous in the Event of it, but with a Tear of intimate Compassion for the Besieged, and the Slain, and the Distressed in the Field of Battle.

*To rejoice with them that do rejoice, is acceptable, to weep with them that weep, is merciful.*

The Fleets and Armies of our Enemies have hitherto (God be praised) been ineffectual to our intended Ruin. Let not their Vices have the Success and Influence to accomplish that melancholy Event. These are the victorious Invaders of Kingdoms consigned to Desolation.

Where are the *Egyptian*, and the *Persian*, and the great *Assyrian* Monarchies? And what is become of the *Grecian*, and of the *Roman* Empires? They are buried  
in



in the *open Sepulchre* of Luxury and Voluptuousness. And all the Kingdoms of the World, and all the Glory of them, from that Moment in which they are actuated by the same fatal Principles, will inevitably begin to sink into the same lamentable Obscurity.

For look into the Manners of a thousand Families, gather from among them the Sensual, and the Profane, and the Immoral, and it is impossible to believe and hope (from any common Observation and Experience) that they can long prosper in the Land. Imagine but the Vices of these *selected* Families to become *national*, and the Evils consequent thereupon, will become *national*: National Discredit, national Misfortune. Good Men are the only good Subjects of his Majesty. For their Virtues, God is *merciful to the Unthankful, and the Evil*. I WILL NOT DESTROY IT FOR THEIR SAKE.

There is not that one Individual in the Kingdom who does not contribute, in proportion to his Consequence in Life, to the Good or Evil of us all. We are all Partakers of the common Lot, of the Joy, or the Sorrow, the Success, or the Misfortune of the Public. We are united in Our Views, in our Interests, and in our Claims. We are as Streams issuing from one original Fountain.

Men

Men of one Faith, one Hope, one God, one Saviour of us all. And that most wretched among Men, who has not the Love of his Country, and the Hope of its Preservation in his Heart, is an Enemy to himself, his Family, and his Friends.

God grant that the Remembrance of this holy Solemnity may survive the Day ; that we may retain a grateful Sense of the Divine Patronage and Protection, not solely as a *Nation*, but as *Individuals*, not in our *Churches* only, but in our *Chambers*, with Devotion. Not absolutely *that we may be seen of Men*, but as more immediately conscious of that awful and sacred Presence, to whom the Secrets of all Hearts are open.

Let the same bright Shining of the Glory of God improve our Virtues to Maturity, and cause our Vices and our Prejudices to wither away : Teaching us in all our Endeavours for the public Good, to remember, in whose Hand are the Vicissitudes and Events of War ; to whose good Providence it is our indispensable Duty, with all Prayer, and Supplication, and Intercession, to resort. That it may please him to bless and preserve the Kingdom, giving Wisdom to our Councils, and to our Arms Success, and to our People Unity and

and Allegiance, and to the Holy Religion which we profess, Honour, Peace, and Safety.

And may the Divine Goodness for evermore protect the *British* Diadem, and the HEAD that wears it, from these the Dawnings of an auspicious Government, to the latest Period of a long and happy Reign! that our Posterity may rejoice in the Remembrance of God's distinguished Mercies, and the Benefit of our inestimable Liberties be transmitted to the Children which are yet unborn.

And let us earnestly believe, and hope, and be persuaded, that God will in his infinite Mercy be propitious to those our united Prayers and Supplications, which we humbly offer before the Throne of Grace, in the ever blessed Name of our Divine Redeemer.



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